

Sender: Elizabeth Warren

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When I first ran for the Senate, we had a contest to name our first t-shirt. By a big margin, the winning t-shirt said, "The Best Senator Money Can't Buy." I've tried to live by that every single day.

I understand that campaigns cost money -- a lot of money -- and I'm deeply grateful to everyone who steps up and invests in our campaign.

But we have a problem in this country: Money has too much influence on our political leaders.

I've already said that I will run my campaign differently -- no Washington lobbyist money, no PAC money, no auditioning billionaires to run a super PAC for me, and no dark-money groups devoted to supporting this campaign.

But today I'm going further. There's another huge way in which money influences presidential campaigns. It usually goes unspoken, but I want to call it out: Candidates for public office in America spend way too much time with wealthy donors.

Consider this: For every time you see a presidential candidate talking with voters at a town hall, rally, or local diner, those same candidates are spending three or four or five times as long with wealthy donors -- on the phone, or in conference rooms at hedge fund offices, or at fancy receptions and intimate dinners -- all behind closed doors.

Even when the candidate's heart is in the right place and the donor is well-intentioned, that time creates a direct relationship between wealth and access to our political leaders. I believe that's wrong: the amount of money you can give shouldn't determine the amount of time you get to spend with a candidate.

The Democratic primary is the time when we get to make choices -- and make a difference. Democrats deserve a chance to choose a nominee whose time is not for sale to people who can write big checks.

So I've made a decision: My presidential primary campaign will be run on the principle of equal access for anybody who joins it.

That means no fancy receptions or big money fundraisers only with people who can write the big checks. And when I thank the people giving to my campaign, it will not be based on the size of their donation. It means that wealthy donors won't be able to purchase better seats or one-on-one time with me at our events. And it means I won't be doing "call time," which is when candidates take hours to call wealthy donors to ask for their support. As a candidate for president, the expectation is you make hours of these calls a week and attend dozens of these exclusive events every quarter.

I'm saying no to that. I am grateful for every donation we get -- and we need every single one! -- but what matters more, much more, is that everybody who supports my campaign is treated equally, regardless of how much they can afford to give. And doing things this way will give me

hundreds and hundreds of hours of time back to spend with more voters, grassroots donors and volunteers.

It's been estimated that up to 70% of a congressional candidate's time is spent with potential wealthy donors -- trying to get them to give, or as a reward for doing so. It's safe to assume that goes for presidential campaigns too, and presidential donors are disproportionately white, male, and wealthy. Look at the 2016 election: the electorate was more diverse than ever, and yet *91% of donors were white*. Only three percent of Americans were millionaires, but 17% of donors were. The wealthy and well-connected have been taught by politicians to expect that more money buys more access -- they've done it for generations, and it too often closes out women and communities of color. We have to do things differently.

No doubt about it, there will be a cost to our approach. In fact, making this decision will ensure that I will be outraised by other candidates in this race.

But it's the right thing to do -- and here's how we can do it and win:

We're going to take the time presidential candidates typically reserve for courting wealthy donors and instead, use it to build organizing event after organizing event in the early primary states and across the country. Organizers and volunteers are the core of building this campaign and expanding our reach, and I'm going to spend my time supporting them.

If we do this in the primary, we will build the kind of grassroots organization we need to win the general election.

By then we'll be up against a Republican machine that will be hell-bent on keeping the White House. They will have PACs and Super PACs and too many special interest groups to count, and we will do what is necessary to match them financially. That means investing—starting now -- in each and every one of our state parties, and in our national party too.

But if we spend the Democratic primary building our on-the-ground strength, we'll have something that the Republicans won't be able to match: a deeply engaged grassroots movement that will win the White House -- and Congress, statehouses, and a lot of other offices that will help Democrats make real change.

There are some Democrats who are so deeply afraid of losing to Donald Trump that they don't want to risk saying or doing anything different at all. Even if they agree that we need big, structural change, they see challenging the status quo as an electoral risk.

But I believe the biggest risk in this election is failing to empower the millions of people who feel the squeeze of an economy rigged against them and the deep frustration of a failing political system that produced Donald Trump in the first place.

So let's change it. Make a donation of any amount to power this grassroots movement today -- and know that no matter what you're able to contribute, you'll be on equal footing with every single other donor to this campaign:

Thanks for being a part of this,

Elizabeth